

A REPORT ON NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
RELATIVE TO THE EDUCATION OF MENTALLY
RETARDED CHILDREN IN THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

REPORT NUMBER 13

Minneapolis
Association
for Retarded
Children



HOLD HIGH A LAMP TO LIGHT THEIR WAY

S E R V I N G M I N N E A P O L I S A N D H E N N E P I N C O U N T Y

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INTRODUCTION

" The test , I say again and again , of any civilization is the measure of consideration and care which is given to its weakest members "

Pearl S. Beck

We of the Minneapolis Association for Retarded Children feel that one of the basic concepts of the American democracy is the right of all children to be educated to the limits of their abilities. The law states that at a certain age all children shall be educated - not all children may be educated. Along with this we feel that the child's own community has the first responsibility for education. But to carry out a community educational program for handicapped children, State assistance is essential in terms of general laws, special aid and in leadership,

It is the hope of this committee to recommend changes in the present laws that will further the rights of mentally retarded children to their share of education in their local community.

The mentally retarded child is first of all, a child, and thus entitled to the same consideration as every other child. Secondly, he is a handicapped child. As such he is entitled to every aid we can give him to function, with his handicap, as a child; that is, whatever special facilities the law can establish to develop him to his maximum capacity,,

If we believe in free public education, then we must believe in an education suited to the needs of the individual child. There is no way of providing free public education for all children except by providing it for every individual child in accordance with his needs and his _ capacities, both physical and mental. With these ideas basic to our philosophy of education, we submit our recommendations for improved services for mentally retarded children in Minnesota.

NEEDS

National Needs

The need for special education is one that reaches into every city and village in America. "Authorities in the field of special education have estimated that from 2 to 3% of the school population is mentally retarded to the extent that special education services are necessary for the pupils' welfare". (I)

The scope of this problem can be seen from this table of percentages of handicapping conditions in children. According to the U. S. Department of Education 8% of all children are born defective. A breakdown according to types follows:

Mentally Retarded	2-3%
Speech Defective	2 %
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	1.5%
Crippled	1.0%
Blind and Partially Blind	.3%
Epileptic	.2%

Minnesota's Needs

During the school year 1954-55, Minnesota had a school enrollment of 584,077 students. Using a figure of 2%, 11,680 children should have been in classes for the mentally retarded. However, 2,872 were in special classes for retarded for this year. This means that in Minnesota only 24.5% or 1 in every 4 retarded children are receiving special education.

Educational facilities range from Minneapolis program which has at the present time 2% of the public school population either in a special class for the mentally retarded or on a waiting list for entrance to a special class to the other extreme where counties in our state have no special educational provisions for retarded children.

Where Are Classes Located

The following Table I shows that there were special classes for the mentally-retarded in twenty-three Minnesota counties in 1954-55. All counties with a public school population of over 10,600 had at least one class. However, some of the counties with less than 4,000 students in their public schools had special classes.

The smallest county with a special class for retarded is Pipestone which has a Group II class (below 50 IQ) for 8 children.

The largest county without a special class is Ottertail with a school population in 1954-55 of 10,044.

The percentage of need being met varies from 74% in Ramsey county to 0% in 64 counties. Koochiching County with a school population of only 3981 is meeting 71% of its estimated need. The overall picture of special classes in Minnesota is one of services in the large cities and in some scattered communities.

The fact that one large urban county and one small rural county are leaders in education for retarded children seems to indicate that classes for retarded have mainly been started through local leadership. The statistics, which show little relationship between school population in a county and special classes, points out the need for leadership and guidance from the State levels

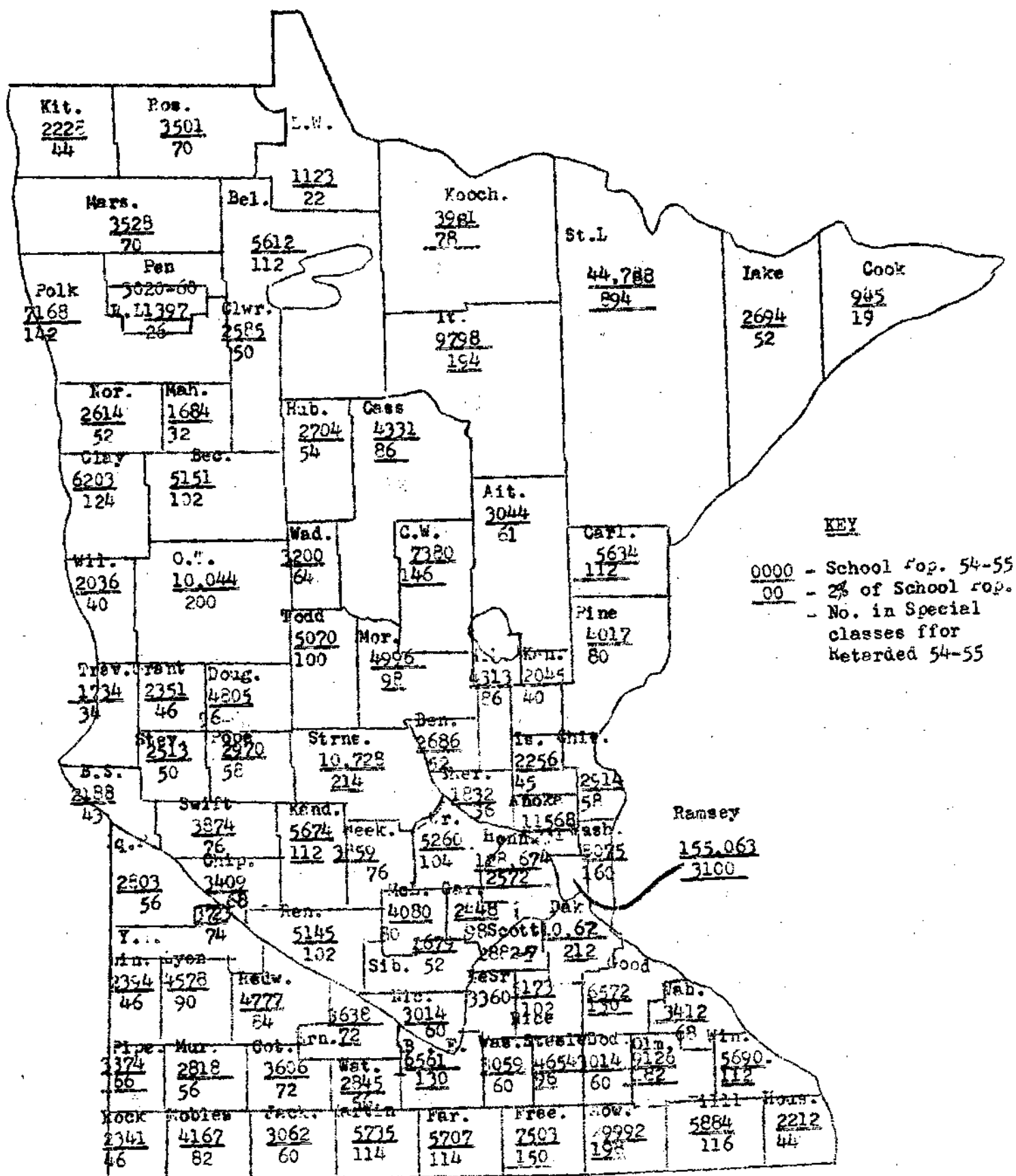
Percent of Need for Special
Classes Being Met and Estimated Need
Based on 1954-1955 Figures

TABLE I.

<u>COUNTY</u>	<u>Students in Public Schools</u>	<u>No. in Retarded Classes</u>	<u>Estimated Need</u>	<u>% of need being met</u>
Ramsey	55,063	815	1,100	74.0%
Koochiching	3,981	56	78	71.0%
Hennepin	128,674	1,200	2,572	47.0%
Winona	5,690	43	112	38.9%
St. Louis	44,788	329	894	37.0%
Blue Earth	6,561	44	130	33.8%
Crow Wing	7,383	34	146	23.3%
Brown	3,638	15	72	21.0%
Dakota	10,672	35	212	16.5%
Morrison	4,996	15	98	15.3%
Douglas	4,805	14	96	14.5%
Carleton	5,634	16	112	14.3%
Stearns	10,728	30	214	14.0%
Cass	4,331	12	86	14.0%
Mower	9,992	25	198	12.1%
Steele	4,654	11	92	12.0%
Pipestone	3,374	8	66	12.0%
Olmsted	9,126	30	182	10.9%
Goodhue	6,572	15	130	10.2%
Kandiyohi	5,674	10	112	8.9%
Itasca	9,798	13	194	6.7%
Anoka	11,568	15	230	6.5%
Freeborn	7,503	8	150	5.3%
64 other Counties	0	0	0	0
Total	584,077	2,872	11,680	

Minnesota Counties Showing School Population and Estimated Number of Children
Who Should be in Special Classes for Retarded and Actual Number in Classes

Table I



KEY

- 0000 - School Pop. 54-55
- 00 - % of School Pop.
- No. in Special classes for retarded 54-55

NATIONWIDE NEEDS

Minnesota's needs in the field of special education for the retarded are, we feel, much the same as those in the rest of the country. We, therefore, sight the following study by John T. Cassell, Director of Training, Mansfield State Training School, Mansfield, Conn. Findings are based on returns from 125 school administrators in each of the 48 states. Both public and private schools were included in the survey. (2)

Major Problems in Order of Importance

1. Shortage of trained personnel.
2. Lack of teacher training facilities.
3. Need for greater public understandings
4. Inadequate classroom space and facilities.
5. Heed for parent education.
6. Lack of suitable curriculum, guides or plans.
7. Lack of suitable teaching material and equipment.
8. Unattractive pay differential for special class teachers.
9. Need for guidance and after school programs.
10. Difficulties in establishing classes for the trainable child.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Division of Special Education

- 1.) We recommend a Division of Special Education within the Minnesota Department of Education. This division should be headed by a director of special education and include bureaus for each of the major handicapping conditions. There should be within this division a bureau for mentally retarded children staffed with consultants who would give guidance in establishing special classes, curriculum adjustment, teacher recruitment, etc.
- 2.) Mandatory Special Education
Provision should be made that school districts must provide classes for education of retarded children up to the age of 18 years. These classes

2.) Mandatory Special Education (Continued)

could be in the district according to need or in cooperation with a neighboring district.

3.) Demonstration Classes at University of Minnesota

Realizing that much needs to be learned about methods of teaching retarded children, we recommend the establishing of one or more demonstration classes of retarded children at the University of Minnesota for research, study and teacher training and extension of aids to the University for this purpose.

4.) State Aids for Special Teacher Training.

Aid to teachers who are willing to take extra work to gain Certification to teach special classes. This could be a part of the aids to school districts which are establishing special classes.

5.) Minimum Class Aid.

Consideration should be given to a minimum aid of \$3,000 per special class with no less than five pupils. Glasses with over ten students would be given aids on the present basis of \$300 per student.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we feel that every child must have the right to education to the limits of his ability, if we truly believe in the ideals of free education in a Democratic Society. We further feel that this is a need that cannot be postponed. For each year a child is without the best education to meet his individual needs his handicap tends to be magnified.

Ultimately all of society must be affected to the extent that a handicapped child is not given the opportunity to develop to his fullest ability,,

It is therefore our hope that the Commission for Handicapped Children will give serious consideration to the recommendations in this report.

Bibliography:

1. U. S. Department of Health, Welfare and Education
Bulletin, 1952 No. 11. Office of Education
2. Cassell, John T. "A Survey of the Major Problems Affecting the Education of the Mentally Retarded in Residential Schools. (Public and Private) and in Public Day Schools," American Journal Mental Deficiency 1956 60-3, 470-487